

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BURIAL GROUNDS AND PROPERTIES
COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2015**

PRESENT: Cllr. Bunyan (in the Chair), Cllrs. Cook, Goodchild and Swann.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Clifford and Fairweather.

Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.

11/15: Issues from Inspections of Burial Grounds:

a) Golford Cemetery:

The issue of repair to the tarmac area in front of the Chapel was still outstanding. We had received the quote of £2,700 some time ago for the jet patching repair but Members had expressed concerns as to whether this was suitable for use in a cemetery. The Clerk offered to obtain a quote from Roland Duke for a more traditional repair for comparison. Cllr. Swann advised the Committee that there was currently only £2000 in the budget for repairs to paths at Golford. Cllrs. Goodchild and Cook both commented on the poor condition of the path which leads from the front entrance to the east side of the Cemetery so Members agreed to add this in when requesting the quote from Duke's.

The Parish Warden had identified that the stained glass windows of the Chapel may need cleaning. The Clerk advised Members that she had previously taken advice from Isobel Ackary, the creator of the windows advising against any form of cleaning.

b) St. Dunstan's Churchyard:

Cllr. Cook stated that the Cemetery was looking good. The Parish Warden has requested some top soil for the topping up where there was evidence of a degree of subsidence in the older graves. The Clerk advised Members that periodically we bought topsoil from Bourne's which is stored at Golford to cover such eventualities.

Ben Hatcher had suggested that a report on the condition of the lime trees in the churchyard was necessary. He had recently completed some work on the trees along the Carriers Road side and thought more was necessary. When he was undertaking the work he had shown Cllr. Swann several examples of dead wood that he had removed but felt that more radical cutting back was necessary. The Clerk reminded the Committee that we had permission to reduce the crowns by a maximum of 30%, anymore and we would have to seek additional authority from Tree Officer Dan Docker. It was agreed to ask Dan Docker to re-examine the trees and liaise with Ben Hatcher regarding additional necessary work.

c) Sissinghurst Cemetery:

Cllr. Bunyan reported that she and the Clerk had visited the Old School site and met with the developer and agreed the position of the boundary fence. The developer had agreed to be responsible for the purchase and erection of the new fence and to remove several small trees in poor condition on the boundary line.

The Clerk advised Members that she had received a letter of complaint from Mr. Palser regarding a decision taken at the July site meeting to place all the existing ashes tablets in the new section on two foot square concrete slabs to prevent any subsequent movement of the tablets. Mr. Palser felt the choice of slab was ugly and not in keeping with the tablet and was very upset that he had not been notified prior to the slab being placed there. The Clerk was aware of another parishioner that had been upset in the wake of this decision. She also stated we had been aware of the complaint for some time and that Cllr. Clifford had agreed to meet Mr. Palser at the Cemetery but due to the Chairman's poor health that meeting had not taken place. Cllr. Bunyan explained the reasoning behind the decision but agreed that we had fallen short of our responsibilities by not informing those affected, before the slabs were put in position. It was agreed that Cllr. Swann and the Parish Warden would make arrangements to meet with Mr. Palser at the Cemetery to discuss how best to resolve the situation.

d) Cranbrook & Sissinghurst War Memorials:

The Clerk advised Members that Dave Howell our tenant at Angley Cottage, still cleaned both memorials prior to the Remembrance Services, free of charge. Cllr. Swann suggested that it should be checked to see if a register of the names on the Sissinghurst War Memorial existed, if it did not, then creating one should be added to the Five Year Plan. The Clerk reported that the Cranbrook War Memorial had suffered damage from a vehicle due to a road traffic accident but the repair had already been completed and the vehicles insurance company had agreed to reimburse us for any costs incurred. The Parish Warden had suggested that we consider installing a power supply for the sound system at the Memorial, the Clerk advised Members that the system is run on car batteries and Cllr. Rook was in the process of organising replacements for our existing batteries.

12/15: Issues from Inspection of Properties:

a) Angley Cottage:

Cllr. Bunyan reported the current tenant had had the existing gas fire removed and the chimney swept and was intending to have a real fire until the area around it had dried out sufficiently; at which point they were intending to install a wood burner. We had already agreed to fund the cost of having the chimney liner put in. She was pleased to report that the heat recovery system was working well.

b) Vestry Hall:

Cllr. Bunyan reported that only this morning the Parish Council had been complimented on the facilities in the Hall by a hirer. The Clerk stated that we had recently had a few problems with the hearing loop in the Hall and it had been discovered that the Caretakers had been turning it off after each booking which was not necessary, so now it had been agreed on the advice of an electrician that it is left on continuously.

c) Vestry Hall Cottage:

Cllr. Bunyan stated there had been no recent inspection of the Cottage and no issues raised by the tenants. However due to damp issues in the past, Members felt that an inspection was overdue. Cllr. Swann stated there was money in the budget to tackle any necessary repairs or to obtain professional advice. Cllr. Goodchild offered to look at identifying a professional that could undertake a survey on the condition of the property. Identifying any issues will not only protect the fabric of the building but also offer protection to the Tenants.

d) Information Centre:

Members were advised that some cast iron guttering and fascia had fallen off. There was also some slipped tiles and a bit painting needed to the side window that had been identified. Scaffolding had already been erected and repair work was scheduled to begin this week. Cllr. Swann advised there was £8000 put aside for any works needed on the roof.

13/15: Noticeboards and Shelters:

It was reported that a basic refurbishment of the Vestry Hall external notice board had been completed. The Millennium Map notice board in Sissinghurst was also in need of some work, it was decided to defer any decisions on refurbishing it until the spring. The village sign in Sissinghurst was still in need of painting, Jan Ashby had already purchased the paint and did not charge for her time so the only costs incurred were for the scaffolding to facilitate the painting. It was decided to ask Jan to liaise with the scaffolder when she was ready to undertake the task.

14/15: Benches & Cycle Racks:

The Clerk reported that two new benches had been ordered, one in memory of John Hooper which would be sited in the lower section of St. Dunstan's Churchyard, the other in memory of Monica Camburn which is to be placed next to an existing bench on the top right hand side. She also mentioned that another bench has been ordered for Anne Marley in memory of her husband Philip. Cllr. Goodchild informed Members that he had removed a broken bench from the Regal car park and had successfully refurbished it and was intending to place it adjacent to the entrance to the museum on his land. All Members thought this was a splendid idea and would be welcomed by parishioners that needed a place to rest, especially those that needed a breather on their way up to Rectory Fields.

15/15: BT Telephone Kiosks:

The Clerk confirmed that we had taken ownership of the Swifts View red telephone box which had now been decommissioned by B.T. The Bakers Cross kiosk is still going through the process. In response to Cllr. Cook, the Clerk confirmed that to put advertising such as tourist leaflets in the kiosks would require us to apply for planning permission. Cranbrook in Bloom may like to decorate them as a planting display.

16/15: Budget & Five Year Plan:

The Five Year Plan was discussed and some amendments were made. A copy is filed with these Minutes. It was identified that the bund at Golford would need emptying and that the work on the lime trees in the churchyard would need to be included in the budget.

A review of fees both in relation to Burials and Vestry Hall/Council Chamber and Addison Room was carried out. After a full debate it was proposed by Cllr. Goodchild, seconded by Cllr. Swann and agreed to increase the Hall fees by £5 per session and to increase the winter heating charge to £10 per session, there were no increases for the Council Chamber or Addison VC Room. In relation to burials it was agreed to increase the fees by varying amounts, a copy of the fee sheet is filed with these Minutes. It was agreed that the rent for Angley Cottage would also be increased by £10 per month to £660 per calendar month. Members wished for it to be noted how pleased they were that we had such reliable tenants and that they appreciated the good order in which the tenants kept the property. Vestry Hall Cottage rent was discussed, but Members were reminded that this is part of a package which includes their wages and would be looked at in the Policy & Resources budget.

Cllr. Swann had prepared the budget in draft form for discussion by Members and the Budget sheets were circulated to members. Members fully discussed the budget figures put forward and amendments were made where necessary.

The Chairman then thanked Cllr. Swann for all his hard work in preparing the budget. Cllr. Bunyan proposed that the Burials and Properties Budget 2016/2017 as filed with these Minutes be agreed. This was seconded by Cllr. Cook and agreed.

17/15: Items for Information:

No items were raised.